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ABSTRACT

This report begins by discussing the role of the New York Education Department; community education agencies; school boards, administrators, teachers, and their associations; community-based organizations; and the role of other state and local agencies in creating collaborative approaches to early childhood programming. Several collaborative early childhood programs are described to make up the bulk of the report, including: the Adolescent Child Care Program (funded by the Child Care and Development Block Grant); Early Childhood Direction centers (statewide referral and information networks for parents and professionals who suspect a child under five years of age to have a disability or be at risk of developing a disability); the New York State Prekindergarten Program; Community Schools Programs; Even Start Family Literacy program; Education of Homeless Children and Youth Program; programs for students with disabilities, including the SuperStart Prekindergarten Program, the SuperStart Plus program, and Kindergarten Plus, Grade One Plus, and Grade Two Plus programs; and the Summer Primary/Promoting Success program. A list of 12 areas in early childhood programming for which multicultural strategies can be developed and a discussion of conclusions end the report. (DR)

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Paper:

A Collaborative Approach
New York State PreKindergarten Programs in New York City
Strategies for Creating
Multicultural Early Childhood Programs

Presented
at
The National Head Start Association 21st Training Conference
Commitment to Quality Head Start Programs
The Nation's Pride
April 15, 1994
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THE ROLE OF THE NEW YORK EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

The Board of Regents and the State Education Department are committed to ensuring that quality comprehensive services and developmentally appropriate programs are provided to young children and their families. Collaboration among many groups and individuals is necessary in order to meet the changing needs of children and their families and to ensure that children not only will come to school ready to learn, but also that schools and other institutions will be able to provide them the opportunities to learn.

The Regents Policy Statement on Early Childhood demands that we focus the collective resources of our public and private sectors, at State and local levels, to provide programs and services for young children and their families. This requires developing concrete strategies for ensuring that every child will have access to supportive environments during the early childhood years and for securing the fiscal and legislative action required to make this policy a reality. Numerous partners have critical roles to play.

Parents are children's first and most enduring teachers. They are or need to be aware of the skills, interests and attitudes of their children. Thus, parents can provide experiences that meet the unique learning style of each child. However, some parents and prospective parents are in need of educational, social and health support themselves to be better prepared to meet their children's needs.

Teachers, child care providers and leaders of community-based activities that involve young children have a responsibility to make every effort to communicate with parents regarding their children. Parents need to play a continuous role within and beyond the home in observing, assessing, planning and advocating for their children's individuality. This can be accomplished through parent-teacher conferences, during home visit, and parent participation in classroom activities, field trips and other special events.

Continuity of positive growth and development during the early childhood years can be reinforced by developing strategies to ensure successful transitions from home to child care settings, home to preschool programs, home to school as well as amount a combination of settings which offer services to young children.

Parents can draw upon the collective input of school personnel, care givers and staff of community organizations to ensure that their children's experiences are developmentally appropriate and that they understand how to follow through at home. It is equally important that information from the home setting be solicited on a regular basis by teachers and others who interact with young children in various settings.

Parents may play many roles in their children's out of home care and other activities. Participation at all levels - as classroom volunteers and observers, as chaperons for field trips and other special events, and as active members of planning and advisory groups - must be accompanied by adequate information and training to reinforce parents as equal partners.

In addition to A New Compact for Learning, Regents Policy Statement on Parent Partnerships: Linking Families, Communities and Schools, provides a framework for reinforcing the principles, goals and recommendations of the Early Childhood Policy Statement regarding the role of parents in the education and development of their children.

If we are to assure that all children enter school ready to learn, State and local agencies must work in cooperation with the families and children. The information, resources and activities provided by all agencies must be family-oriented and must actively involve, parents in the planning, implementation and evaluation processes. Working together, schools families, businesses, libraries, community organizations, cultural, religious and educational institutions can support parents in successfully rearing their young children and improving the quality of life for their families.

The Role of Education Agencies

The education community can play a variety of roles in providing the safe, healthy, nurturing environments all children need, in cooperation with parents and guardians, public agencies, the private sector, and voluntary organizations, Education agencies have a major role in addressing the needs of all children and their families and putting the Regents Early Childhood Policy into practice.

Education agencies can provide leadership to help foster collaborative efforts. They can play a variety of roles with other agencies to improve health services by advocating for expansion of State and local health services, offering school sites to provide health services for children enrolled in elementary schools, providing prenatal car for pregnant adolescents in middle and secondary schools, and directly providing increased services through school health programs. The health status of children, beginning with prenatal care, must be improved for education results to improve.

Education agencies can also offer parenting programs directly through schools urge other agencies to offer them, and collaborate with other agencies to offer them jointly. Family support and education programs and services help parents and guardians to acquire parenting skills and offer various resources to empower and strengthen families. Such programs can be expanded along with family literacy programs, such as Even Start, that combines early education with adult literacy and parenting.

Most children live in families where either the single parent or both parents work. Working parents often need child care beyond school hours, and their children need time for recreation and wholesome supervision. Schools can make space available for school-age child care and develop school-age child care programs in collaboration with community child care and other youth-serving agencies.

The State Education Department can profoundly influence the nature of learning in the formal school setting be ensuring that: curriculum and assessment are interrelated and proceed from educational objectives and desired outcomes, and instruction and assessment proceed from sound principles of child development and theories of learning. Activities include developing syllabi; creating statewide outcomes and assessment systems; certifying teaching and administrative staff; and offering training, technical assistance and monitoring for State and federally funded programs. All of these activities are avenues through which developmentally appropriate practices in schools can be promoted.

The State Education Department's Office of Elementary, Middle and Secondary Education, through its policy and field services teams, will continue to work in concert with

local agencies to foster the achievement of early childhood goals at the school district level. In particular, the Early Childhood Community Coordination Committees, required by Commissioner's Regulations to be established in schools districts and BOCES that operate New York State Prekindergarten Programs, can be expanded, along with Head Start Policy Councils and other similar groups, as a vehicle to support a statewide agenda for young children and families.

Support for individualized instruction and heterogeneous groupings of children in early childhood programs is a viral role for education agencies and other service providers. Accepting and responding to the diversity that is natural among children is a central tenet of developmentally appropriate early childhood education. In conflict with this principle are the strict grouping of children into grade levels by age and the practice of classifying children and educating them separately on the basis of Limited English Proficiency (LEP), educational disadvantage, or disability.

The Role of School Boards, Administrators, Teachers and Their Associations

The quality of teaching and learning and care of young children must be ensured. School boards, school district administrators, teachers and their associations, in cooperation with each other and others of the community, are responsible for ensuring that quality early childhood programs and comprehensive services are provided for children and families. Together, they must staff early childhood classrooms with teachers who have the educational background, experiences and credentials to ensure equity of educational outcomes. Teachers must have the resources and ongoing support they need to implement an integrated and interdisciplinary approach to learning.

School boards set the stage for promoting shared decision making, collaboration and school development. They have the responsibility for targeting resources and establishing policies which support developmentally appropriate practices. They must view schools as educational facilities and caring communities that support the development of the whole child. They are responsible for hiring administrators who are experienced and knowledgeable in early childhood, and who have the leadership capabilities, authority and support required to provide quality programs for children and families.

Teachers and administrators must see that classroom space, equipment, materials and teacher-child ratios meet standards of quality. They must provide opportunities for ongoing group and individualized professional development, and communication among and with parents. Administrators must be visible participants who spend time in classrooms and who regularly interact with teachers, families and personnel of community agencies. Familiarity with the quality of teaching and learning throughout the building and with the varied elements of a comprehensive program will enhance and inform the many decisions that must be made.

Teachers associations also play a major role in ensuring quality. They are advocates for programs which build upon the strengths and diversity of children and their families. They support teachers by sharing information, highlighting successful practices, developing resources, establishing networks and offering a broad range of professional development experiences.

The Role of Community-Based Organizations

Community-based organizations play a major role in supporting early childhood programs and services by participating in an integrated approach to service delivery, by supporting opportunities for parents to contribute to the individual learning needs of their children and by facilitating successful transitions of children from home to child care and educational settings.

When children enter school, they bring a wealth of experiences from home, extended-families, child care and other settings within the community. It is, therefore, important that programs which promote child development, parent involvement and effective teaching and learning processes have the support of the entire community. Community-based organizations can encourage and participate in out-reach efforts to identify and develop strategies to meet the educational, social, emotional and physical needs of young children in the context of the "real life" community/home environment. These strategies may include co-sponsoring programs by combining funds from various sources and providing facilities to offer day care, before and after school care and other services that meet the needs of working and nonworking parents.

Every community has resources that can provide unique opportunities for individualized learning for young children and their families. These diverse networks vary from community to community and may include churches and other places of worship, libraries, museums, historical societies zoos, wildlife preserves and other cultural enrichment experiences.

Parents and their young children need to have easy and convenient access to the educational and recreational offerings of libraries and museums. These community educational institutions have a major role to play, especially when information is disseminated. Librarians are important in developing activities both on the State level (by including the Division of Library Development staff) and on the local level (by including public librarians) in delivering a range of programs for parents and caretakers, for young children, and for parents and children together, including programs for adolescent parents. These programs can be expanded and refocused to address the Department's early childhood priorities by ensuring that any materials developed to education parents and caretakers about the needs and development of young children can be made available to all libraries through the library systems. The Department's Division of Library Development is prepared to assist with this dissemination.

Working closely with public broadcasting stations and with the Debarment's office of Educational Television and Public Broadcasting to develop and broadcast public service announcements and public education programs aimed at informing the general public about healthy, productive, creative and exciting ways that parents and other caretakers and help their young chidden to develop and grow is an extremely useful and important role addressed through the community.

Cultural activities and experience in the arts can serve both to motivate and enhance interest and participation in early childhood programs for both children and their families. Local planning activities should involve education staff from local museums to encourage and support their developing projects and programs for young children and their caretakers.

Community-based organizations can also provide information on a regular basis to schools, day care centers, and employers so that options are available to parents. Information can be provided through a variety of media, including print, videotape, audiotape and computer networks, etc. Activities can be provided on a flexible schedule during afternoons, evenings, weekends and school vacations. Community agency staff can work with teachers, administrators and parents to provide resources which enrich and extend learning for children and their families during the early childhood years. Opportunities for training and staff development for school personnel and child care workers can also be offered and subsidized by community agencies.

Community agencies may be called upon to assist families in supplementing their health, nutrition, social and emotional needs. This will provide security and support for young children as they move through their daily lives. The special services provided by these agencies can respond to the unique needs of diverse cultures, including those for whom English is a second language.

The Role of Other State and Local Agencies

The Permanent Interagency Committee on Early Childhood Programs (PICECP) has provided strong support for the Regents Early Childhood Policy Statement. Its membership includes representatives from various State agencies, such as the Departments of Education, Social Services, Health, and Economic development, and the Council on Children and Families; parents; community organizations and others. This Committee is representative of those agencies that must work collaboratively to advance the statewide implementation of the Early Childhood Policy Statement. This can be accomplished through continued discussion, advocacy, and dissemination.

The Permanent Interagency Committee is comprised of an Advisory Committee and a Steering Committee with numerous work groups. The advisory Committee includes three subcommittees:

- Seamless Funding and Parent Access;
- Collaborative Structures; and
- Coordination of Public/Private Initiatives.

The Steering Committee includes the following work groups:

- Coordination of Early Childhood Programs;
- Day Care Center Inspection Process;
- Data Development;
- Career and Professional Development, --
  . Training and Technical Assistance
  . Career advancement
  . Higher Education;
- Integrated Programs; and
- Health and Nutrition.

The work of the PICECP, which is directly linked to the goals of the Early Childhood Policy Statement, includes: replicating developmentally appropriate program models;

regulating consistency of program standards and practices; expanding and strengthening collaboration between schools and community-based organizations; examining ways to increase flexibility in the use of federal funds; and exploring possibilities for increasing private sector support for early childhood services.

The permanent Interagency Committee on Early Childhood Programs can assist State Agencies at the regional and county levels to become aware of the recommendation and strategies put forth in the early childhood action plan and locally assist in its implementation. The organizational structure of the Committee provides an important mechanism for addressing early childhood issues. The New York State Education Department has developed a collaborates with local community school boards and local city state and federal agencies to develop the following Early Childhood programs:

NEW YORK CITY COLLABORATIVE EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS

ADOLESCENT CHILD CARE PROGRAM
(Child Care and Development Block Grant)

School-based child care programs enable teenage parents to continue school with the knowledge that their young children are safe, warm and cared for. But these programs can be so mush more. They can, and should, be a quality educational experience for the preschoolers. The Adolescent Child Care Program's goal is to help this happen with funding and technical assistance.

First, it helps child care programs comply with current New York State Department of Social Services child care regulations. Then, it helps them enrich their programs.

If facilities don's meet regulation requirements, block grant funds from this program can be used to remodel space. If better supervision and interaction is needed, additional personnel can be hired. If program development, equipment, and materials or staff development need to be enhanced, Adolescent Child Care Program funds can provide them.

In recognition of the important role parents play in early childhood development, this program also funds parent education for teens who are pursuing a high school education or job training. And it funds, social health , and nutrition services to meet a broad range of children's needs.

Special Education Programs

EARLY CHILDHOOD DIRECTION CENTERS

Early Childhood Direction Centers are a statewide referral and information network for parents and professionals who suspect a child under five years of age to have a disability or be at risk of developing a disability. The centers are staffed by professionals with a background in human services, including social workers, nurses, special education teachers, or others who are sensitive to parents' concerns and experienced i working with services agencies.

Direction Center staff gathers and continuously updates information regarding services available from various agencies, procedures for applying for services, and available financial arrangements. They can arrange for children to be seen by doctors or other professionals who can determine whether a child needs services. They can help parents obtain medical, educational, and social services, including transportation. They can also arrange for day care, therapy, and parent education.

Fifteen centers are currently funded by the Legislature and administered by the State Education Department statewide, including one in each of New York City's five counties. Parents can receive information and referrals over the phone or visit the centers in person. Once a year until the child's fifth birthday, center staff follows up with each family to make sure it is receiving the services it needs.

PREKINDERGARTEN PROGRAM

While every child goes through various stages of development, each has his or her own personality, learning style, and growth pattern. This all taken into account and reflected in the way children are taught and evaluated in The New York State Prekindergarten Program. Recognizing that young children learn through play, this program provides a "hands-on," play-oriented program for four-year-old that is appropriate to their stage of development.

This is not an "academic" program that emphasizes the use of drills and work sheets. Instead, it focuses on helping children learn how to learn and uses play to develop physical, social, problem-solving, and language skills, as well as moral judgement and independence.

The New York State Prekindergarten Program provides the young child with a comfortable, secure, and inviting transition from home to school. Children can choose from activities that include dramatic play, block building, creative expression with art materials, and woodwork construction. They can explore science through natural materials such as water and sand. Each day, they come together to communicate with one another, sing songs, listen to a story, and share a meal.

In addition to a quality educational program, the program provides comprehensive services that include health, social, and nutritional services; active parent involvement: and continuity through the primary grades.

Parent Education Programs teach parenting skills to people of all ages and can focus on any aspect of parenting. They prepare children for success as future parents and caregivers. They provide information and support to teens and adults who are already parents or who care for children. They may include a district wide or regional Parent Center.

The State of New York funds 10 Parent Education Programs. In addition to these, Parent Centers and Parent Support Programs are operating in many areas of the State. Each community can tailor its program to meet its own needs.

With a belief that it's never too early to learn about being a good parent, one school district has a parent and infant visit elementary schools regularly over the course of the school year. The children observe how the infant changes and grows and watch the way the parent and child communicate.

Another takes a three-pronged approach. Children in school learn about family life skills and human development as part of the curriculum. Meanwhile, Parent Peer Partners make home visits to families of children at risk of school failure. and anyone with an interest in learning more about parenting can visit a resource center, which loans books, videos. film strips, and periodicals.

Another program serves families of elementary and junior high children who have emigrated from Haiti, Jamaica, Trinidad, and the Dominican Republic. It provides workshops in the parents' language on what children are learning in school and how they can help at home. It also helps parents understand child development and ways to handle the challenges of parenthood. English as a Second Language classes are also taught.

In one innovative approach, teens (two-thirds of whom are male) plan and volunteer in a play group for three-to five-year old. In another, parents provide peer counseling, arrange workshops, and refer other parents in hard-to-reach rural areas to education, health, and social services. A referral service, funded in part by a local corporation, helps families find safe, nurturing child care and trains home day-care providers.

Multifaceted Programs

COMMUNITY SCHOOLS PROGRAMS

Based on the recognition that the way a child learns cannot be separated from the way a child lives, Community Schools are school-community partnerships designed to meet the needs of the whole child.

At a Community School, the school becomes the focal point of the community, and the community becomes an integral and active factor in learning. Parents, health and human service agencies, community organizations, businesses, and colleges are all drawn into the general educational program.

Anything the community has to offer can be part of the Community School - from doctors or dentists on-site to adult education, to art shows, to child care, to job counseling, to recreational programs, to social services, to nutrition workshops, and more.

Community Schools provide many opportunities for learning, such as classrooms where children of different ages learn together, mentoring by people of all generations, tutoring, enrichment activities, and prekindergarten. They open early in the morning and stay open and busy into the evening, on weekends and during summers. Parents are welcome and active participants in school decisions about curriculum, instructional materials, student groupings, scheduling, budgeting, staffing, health and safety, and other issues that affect their children. The involvement of community members helping teachers, working with children, and sharing knowledge fosters an exciting atmosphere.

Multifaceted Programs

EVEN START FAMILY LITERACY PROGRAM

The Even start Family Literacy Program combines adult education, parenting education, and early childhood education into a unifies family program that builds on existing community resources. It provides family-centered education projects to help parents become full partners in the education of their children, to assist children in reaching their full potential as learners, and to provide literacy training for their parents.

An eligible applicant for the Even Start competitive grants may include a local educational agency applying with a community-based organization, a public agency, an institution of higher education, or other nonprofit organization. Program participants include parents who are eligible for Adult Basic Education and their child or children under the age of eight, who reside in a school attendance area receiving Chapter 1 services.

Even Start was designed with an appreciation for the fact that parents are their children's first - and most important - teachers. and it fills in the gaps so that existing programs can provide more comprehensive services for families. If there's already an adult education program but no way for a parent to get there, Even Start provides transportation. If a parent wants to attend parenting sessions but has no child care, Even Start takes care of it. If there are no preschool, or adult education classes, or literacy programs, Even Start can create them.

What makes Even Start different from other programs is its emphasis on bringing children and parents together in activities that combine early childhood education and adult/parenting education. Every Even Start program includes some activities at participants' homes, but portions of the program may be also be held at central locations, such as schools or community centers. Services for families may begin in the home and move to a center as parents' confidence grows.

Home visits are planned with the family to build upon individual strengths and interests of the adults and children. Experiences for adults and children are designed to use materials readily available in the home. Joint parent/child activities are designed to enhance literacy in the broadest sense through conversation, sharing books and stories, writing, and encouraging parents to be positive models for their children.

Multifaceted Programs

EDUCATION OF HOMELESS CHILDREN AND YOUTH

The Education of Homeless Children and Youth program was created to ensure that homeless children and youth have the same access to educational services that other children have. Its goals are to increase enrollment, attendance, and success in schools and to provide programs for those in danger of failing to complete school.

The program can address a number of unique needs caused by homelessness. A lack of a permanent address can cause transportation problems, for example, while a lack of birth certificate, school records, and other documentation can cause enrollment delays.

Homeless children must receive the same transportation services as other children. Their records and evaluations must be readily available when a child or youth enters a new school. The Education of Homeless Children and Youth program assists in resolving these and other enrollment/attendance issues.

The Education of Homeless Children and Youth program provides an opportunity to develop and put into place strategies and model programs that address the educational and other support needs of homeless children and their families. Its objective is to improve coordination and delivery of a full range of services to ensure these needs are identified and served by schools in cooperation with appropriate agencies.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Both federal and state law require that preschool children with disabilities be provided a free, appropriate public education to meet their individual needs. In addition, they are to be educated, to the maximum extent appropriate, with non-disabled children.

Services may include individual instruction, group instruction, or consultations provided by certified special education teachers who come to an approved or licensed prekindergarten, Head Start Program, work site of the provider, child's home, hospital, State facility, or child-care location.

The instruction is designed to help preschoolers with disabilities benefit from an early childhood education program. The consultations are to help early childhood teachers change the learning environment or their teaching methods to accommodate the needs of a preschool student with disabilities.

Other services include: special classes with others who have similar needs for specialized instruction; special classes that include both children with and without disabilities; and special classes with other disables children in a location where non-disabled children are also taught. Related services such as, but not limited to, audiology, counseling, occupational education, physical therapy, speech pathology, and medical and psychological services are also available. In New York State, a wide variety of public and private agencies provide programs and services for preschool students with disabilities. These 50 regional centers throughout the State in BOCES and large cities provide parents, teachers, administrators, board of education members, support personnel, and others with information and training on special education topics through printed materials and workshops.

Each SETRC program is staffed with full-time training specialists who work directly with district personnel, parents, and community members. Training programs cover a wide variety of topics depending on locally identified needs. For example, regular classroom teachers might learn techniques and strategies for integrating students with disabilities into the classroom. Parents might learn how to work better with schools, teachers, and their own children. Administrators and school board members might learn about the rules, regulations, and laws pertaining to children with disabilities and the responsibilities of school districts.

In addition to training, center personnel provide direct technical assistance to individuals or groups on everything from developing Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) to operating a computerized management system for the administration of special education programs.

Information is also made available through pamphlets, brochures, newsletters, and copies of laws and regulations pertaining to special education.

SuperStart Prekindergarten Program

Through Collaboration with the New York Stte Education Department, Chapter I Federal Programs, the New York City PUblic schools have developed a pre-Kindergarten called SuperStart. Superstart is a comprehensive program that incorporates health, nutrition, social services, parent involvement, community involvement, and staff development into a developmentally appropriate experiential curriculum. SuperStart provides a nurturing environment designed to promote the cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development of young children. The program is distinguished by strategies for ongoing assessment of children's strength, needs, and progress; frequent adult-child interaction; and ongoing collaboration with children's families.

Goals:

- to provide a comprehensive program that integrates instruction with health, nutrition,and social services.
- to provide cooperation among agencies that offer services to young children and their families.
- to offer regularly scheduled professional development to all staff.
- to encourage the meaningful involvement of family and community members through their participation in program planning, classroom visits, participation in workshops and activities, and home visits.
- to enhance the self-esteem of children by demonstrating respect for their native cultures, native languages, and learning styles and infusing a multicultural perspective into all aspects of the program.

Objectives:

- promote children's language development, and understanding of science and mathematics concepts, using a hands-on experiential approach.
- provide opportunities for creativity through exploration with art materials and activities using music and movement.

Number of school Districts: 30
Number of children: 10,204

SuperStart Plus

SUPERSTART PLUS is an integrated program that provides an opportunity for disabled and nondisabled three-and four-year-old

children to grow and learn together in the same learning environment. This nurturing environment is designed to promote the cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development of young children. It is implemented through a reich array of instructional and support services in addition to strong professional development and parent participation components.

Goals:

- to provide the least restrictive environment possible for mildly/moderately and severely disabled children that nurtures their strengths and adapts instruction and the classroom environment to their special needs.
- to provide an integrated early childhood environment for disabled and nondisabled children.
- to increase the awareness and sensitivity of disabled and nondisabled youngsters, their parents, and staff to the potential for all children and enable them to understand each other as individuals and to develop positive relationships.
- to develop the foundation in prekindergarten for expanding mainstreaming as disabled and nondisabled program participants progress through the grades.

Objectives:

- Increase in children, parents, and educators the understanding of, and sensitivity to, individual differences by providing opportunities for interaction through learning centers, workshops, and institutes.
- increase opportunities for children with disabilities to learn from observing and interacting with their nondisabled peers.

Number of Community School Districts: 13

Number of Children: **214 (special education)**
326 (general education)

Kindergarten Plus, Grade One Plus, and Grade Two Plus

KINDERGARTEN PLUS, Grade One Plus and Grade Two Plus is an integrated program for disabled and nondisabled five, six-, and seven-year-old children learning together in the same classroom environment. The program reflects a commitment to educating disabled youngsters in the least restrictive environment possible.

Kindergarten Plus continues the services provided in the integrated prekindergarten program SuperStart Plus in Community School Districts 2, 7, 10, 11, 15, 18,21 30, and 31. Grade One Plus continues

the integrated Kindergarten Plus experience in Community School Districts 15, 18, 21, and 30.

Nondisabled children participating in the Integrated Early Childhood Program must be eligible for participation in Chapter I. Children who received Chapter I services in prekindergarten and kindergarten are eligible for participation in this innovative project, which is designed to maintain the progress made in previous years. Other participants are selected based on their educational needs as determined by a uniform, district-wide screening instrument.

Goals:

- to provide a fully integrated experience in the least restrictive environment possible for children with mild/moderate or moderate/severe disabilities to learn alongside their nondisabled peers.
- to ensure a high quality, developmentally appropriate program for all participating children in areas of physical, emotional, social, and cognitive development.
- to provide an integrated curriculum adapted to individual needs and facilitated by learning areas or centers in which a child can initiate, select, plan, evaluate, and revise classroom activities.
- to use the thematic approach to provide common curricular experiences that address the individual needs and interests of participating children.
- to provide a flexible curriculum adapted to meet the wide-ranging needs of participating children.

Objectives

- develop an understanding of mathematical concepts through exploration and discovery.
- develop children's ability to create and communicate mathematicalideas in discourse and writing by providing many opportunities for verbal and written interaction.
- develop social skills and respect for individual differences by working incooperative groups with other children.
- expand children's ability to communicate through listening, speaking, reading, writing, and other alternate forms of communication.

Number of Community School Districts: 9
Number of Children: 190 (special education)
357 (general education)

Summer Primary/Promoting Success

SUMMER PRIMARY/PROMOTING SUCCESS is a summer program designed designed to provide assistance to children entering kindergarten through grade four.

Goal:

- to expand children's opportunties through experiences such as exploring the community andits resources.
- to increase children's intellectual power through methods and materials designed to develop higher-level thinking process, and mathematical and communication sills.
- to provide opportunities for children to create and share individual and group projects.
- to develop a positive self-concept in children through activities and experiences that elict and demonstrate indiviual strengths, interest, cultures, and achievements.

Objective:

- utilize effective experiential activities for a child-centered program.
- develop thematic approaches to instruction.
- infuse multicultural edicationin all areas of the curriculum.
- emphasize the development and enrichment of language skills, critical and creative thinking, literacy, mathematics, science, and social and physical development by using a literature-based, hands-on, experiential approach.
- provide a fully staffed family facility on each site, as mandated by the program, to improve communication among parents/caregivers, teachaers, and administrators.

Number of Community School Districts: 32

Number of Children: 30,000

Multicultural Strategies for the Early Childhood Learning Environment

Presently, our system of education is not designed to accommodate the vast influx of culturally diverse students. In most early childhood programs, classrooms are not equipped to fully reflect the culturally diversity represented by the children. Most classroom materials do not presently have a selection of toys and games that include **all** of the cultures of the children. The housekeeping areas are not equipped with an assortment of utensils that could be found in the homes of the children. The dolls do not represent **all** the cultures of the children. Most classrooms do have white and black dolls, but few have Asian, Hispanic, or Native American dolls. Most ethnic dolls found in early childhood programs often are not representative of the authentic facial features, complexions, and hair textures of the cultures of the children enrolled in the program. Even though teachers are aware of the lack of appropriate materials, few programs have implemented multicultural curricula (Lesibu, 1992).

Early childhood learning environments should function to bridge the gap from home to school. Therefore, it is crucial that culture-specific elements of each child's home life be represented in his/her learning environment. The immediate gains from this approach will be that learning is facilitated because each child will be more comfortable and adjust to the learning environment. Having his/her own ethnic identity represented promotes self-esteem in each child and exposes them to the diverse ethnic backgrounds of others. The long-term gain is that a student will be better prepared to function in a global community.

By using the twelve mutlicultural strategies, early childhood teachers will be able to transform existing programs into individualized child-centered multicultural learning environments. The effective implementation of these practical strategies will serve to

- Foster the development of positive attitudes toward others who are different by assimilating details of cultural, economic, and lifestyle variety into the learning environment.

- Recognize and value parents by incorporating their talents and resources into daily planned activities, ensuring that each parent's unique cultural experience is represented to the children.

- Connect the school learning environment to the community in which the children and their families live.

- Promote equity in the classroom by using materials that reflect positive role-model images of parents from different ethnic backgrounds.

- Create activities, materials, and learning experiences that will help children, parents, teachers, and administrators understand and accept cultural diversity as a natural part of daily life.

The key to successfully applying these strategies is parent and community involvement. By promoting parental involvement, parents of all backgrounds can ensure a truly authentic and multicultural learning environment

These strategies can provide a comprehensive plan of action for teachers and administrators to implement a multicultural early childhood learning environment. Also, these practical strategies can assist early childhood educators in planning, implementing, and developing a multicultural early childhood program. Emphasis is placed on the development of a multicultural learning environment through a natural evolutionary process using the following strategies:

MULTICULTURAL STRATEGIES FOR THE EARLY CHILDHOOD LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Strategy # 1 ART - To help children appreciate and value diversity and become familiar with differences, plan creative learning experiences which utilize diversity of colors, shapes, textures and concrete objects.

Strategy # 2 BLOCKS - To expose children to different perspectives and lifestyles, use the block building area as a environment where children can build, perform, or create imagery of a "different place," providing unlimited possibilities.

Strategy # 3 CREATIVE ARTS - To promote parent and community involvement, include parents in the educational experiences and reflect diversity by utilizing parents as resources. Develop a parent talent bank and incorporate parent skills and talents into the on-going classroom activities.

Strategy # 4 FIELD TRIPS - To connect the community with the learning environment, plan neighborhood filed trips that relate to the cultural backgrounds of the children and include parents.

Strategy # 5 FOLK TALES - To promote language development and appreciation of age differences, invite parents, senior citizens, and storytellers to come into the classroom to share "old wise tales" that reflect the cultures of the children.

Strategy # 6 HOLIDAY CELEBRATIONS - To promote respect and acknowledgement of other cultures, survey the families of the children to determine which holiday are celebrated and involve the parents in planning and presenting of special activities.

Strategy # 7 FAMILY CENTER - To develop human relations and life skills for family living, survey the parents, staff,a nd community and equip the housekeeping area with a variety of utensils dress-up clothes, and foods from different cultures. Hang pictures of different kinds of families in the learning center.

Strategy # 8 LANGUAGE ARTS - To promote language development, select books, records, and tapes that reflect the cultural backgrounds of the children in a positive and realistic manner. Record the experience of the children in their language.

Strategy # 9 MUSIC & MOVEMENT - To promote appreciation and respect of different kinds of music and dance, use a variety of musical instruments, dances and songs as a part of the everyday routine. Use music during transition, storytelling and meal time to expose children to many different sounds and rhythms.

Strategy # 10 - PUPPETRY - To promote the expression of feelings and deal with attitudes about differences, select a variety of puppets for dramatic plat that reflects the cultural backgrounds of the children. Use puppets to develop communication skills and language through role-playing.

Strategy # 11 MATH/SCIENCE - To promote different methods of problem solving and experimentation, create an ethnic recipe book by surveying the staff and parents. Involve parents in the preparation of the food. Plan activities that include concrete concepts and materials from the cultural backgrounds of the children.

Strategy # 12 TOY & GAMES - To promote an awareness and appreciation of different ways of children play, survey the families and identify games that are played in the homes. Include a variety of toys and games that reflect the cultural backgrounds of the children.

Conclusions

Presently there is a lack of understanding and agreement on what is appropriate and what should be included in the pre-kindergarten curriculum. So fa, most programs focus on the symbolic aspects of a culture, which includes clothing, food, and holidays. Teachers should realize that parents can be a valuable resource to develop appropriate activities and to provide authentic representations of the cultures of the children enrolled in the program. Therefore, the development of a curriculum model that culturally and linguistically reinforces a child's home environment, and promotes cognitive, psychoemotional skills and language development is essential (Lesibu, 1992).

Reforming and changing the classroom environment will not only require physical changes, but in-service training of staff as well. Teachers and staff who must interact with the children coming from culturally diverse backgrounds need to be sensitized to the cultural practices and behaviors of the children they must interact with. As well, the program philosophy and administration must be consistent with the strategies used in the classroom. If there is no effort to hire and train teachers who represent the cultures of the children, then the program cannot fully implement a multicultural curriculum. If parents and the community from which the children come from is not reflected in the curriculum and classroom learning environment on an ongoing basis, then multicultural education cannot be fully implemented (Lesibu, 1992).

The major goal of multicultural education is to transform the school program so that students who are culturally diverse will receive equal opportunity to learn in school (Banks, 89). A major objectives of multicultural educations to increase the academic achievement of students from diverse groups who have been identified as "at risk" because of their socioeconomic status. This will be done by transforming the total school environment and making it more consistent with their cultures, behaviors and learning styles. another major goal is to help student develop a more positive self-concept be exposing them to positive feedback about their cultural identify. Kenneth Clark's research demonstrated that young children who develop a strong, positive self-concept do better than those who do not develop a positive self-image. It is also important to help promote respect and appreciation of cultural differences so that all young children will develop an appreciation respect for people who are different from them selves. Ideally, this could be the critical foundation for the development of a more democratic society for the next generation.

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